

## Site Inspection

**Site:** Custis Mill Pond.

**Location:** On route 625 1.2 miles north of route 30 approximately 3 ½ miles northwest of the town of West Point in King William County, USGS 7.5 West Point and New Kent Quadrangles.

**Date:** 8 June 2009, July 15, 2009.

**Inspector:** David K. Hazzard and Martha W. McCartney.

**Mission:** Visit mill and view pond and surroundings to assess historic potential.

**Background:** The Custis Mill Pond and adjoining land to the south and east is owned by the Custis Fishing Club, formerly the Custis Hunting and Fishing Club. Present on the property today are the remnants



Custis Mill Ruins

of a mill, a log house, the hunt club lodge, and a 1950s house and shed. The structures are situated on high ground on the east end of the pond adjacent route 625. Traffic used to traverse the 30' wide earthen dam that created the pond but the more recent route 625 to the east now carries that traffic. The land and water of the pond encompasses approximately 180 acres. Development is proposed for the land bordering the north shore of the pond. In light of proposed development and with concern for the historic potential of the mill, the DHR was approached to look into the property.

**Action:** I called Martha McCartney, noted research historian and former DHR employee, about possible maps that might relate to the property history. She and I then conducted an examination of the mill and its environs. We met with the caretaker of the property Mr. M.C. Lipscomb and were given a tour of the premises. I photo documented resources present. She prepared a summary history of Custis Mill which is attached as an appendix.

**Results:** We were shown six structures on the property and miscellaneous features associated with the mill. The mill present was in ruin having been damaged by two tree falls during a storm about 15 years ago. It had been operational at least as recently as the 1950s serving as a grist mill. Mr. Lipscomb worked at the mill under his father at that time. The collapsed roof, framing

members, brick walls, and mill machinery were all in evidence. The mill race and flume framing were also present. The earthen mill dam is in good condition with a newer spillway situated west of an earlier spillway. About 200' west of the mill is a log cabin built in July of 1908. An inscription cut into one of the logs to the left of the front door reads Rob B Wood, July 10, 1908. The cabin was built for a Mr. Thornton who purchased the property and served as the hunting and fishing club's first president. The club was organized in 1904 and was limited to a membership of 40. Fifty feet south of the cabin is the clubhouse built circa 1906. Wooden steps lead down from the surrounding porch to the boathouse on the pond. One hundred feet south of the clubhouse and slightly east is the caretaker's house built in the 1950s. One other structure identified was a modern shed immediately southwest of the mill which is used by the caretaker for sundry activities.

**Recommendation:** That a determination of eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places be pursued for the acreage of the fishing club log house and clubhouse, the pond, and the mill be pursued.

**Property Contact:** M.C. (MC or Mac) Lipscomb  
Caretaker  
804 201-8222

**Notes:** At present it does not appear as if determination of eligibility will have any effect on proposed development. The pond is exclusively owned by the club and no one in the new development will have legal access to the water.

**David K. Hazzard**  
**August 27, 2009**

## Appendix

### SUMMARY HISTORY OF CUSTIS MILL

Around 1771 George Washington, who had wed the widowed Martha Dandridge Custis in 1759, began accumulating land on behalf of his stepson, John Parke Custis. Custis, due to come of age in 1778, stood to inherit the property of his late father, Daniel Parke Custis, whose vast holdings included Eltham in New Kent and part of Romancoke in King William County. In early 1774 Washington purchased from Colonel Bernard Moore's creditor, William Black, 1,780 acres of the Claiborne plantation called Romancoke, which originally encompassed 6,600 acres and extended from the Pamunkey River to the Mattaponi. The property Washington bought lay directly across the Pamunkey River from Eltham and ran along the lower (or east side) of Bull Swamp. When Black placed an advertisement in the October 14, 1773, edition of the *Virginia Gazette*, he offered for sale two King William County properties: 1,780 acres called Romancoke and a nearby grist mill that was readily accessible from the Mattaponi River and could be readily converted into a merchant mill. On April 12, 1774, attorney Bartholomew Dandridge informed George Washington that his land purchase from William Black had been consummated. He said that in addition to the deed for Romancoke, he also had received from Seaton's attorney a deed "for the mill & 100 acres of land." Dandridge added that he expected to receive from Colonel Thomas Moore, a quit claim deed for the Seaton property. Primary sources reveal that the land Washington was buying from Seaton was contiguous to, but not part of, Romancoke and that it included a mill that was erected sometime prior to 1742.

Augustine Moore's January 20, 1742, will reveals that among the properties he owned at the time of his death in July 1743 were Romancoke and some contiguous land he had bought from the Rev. John Fox, to whom it had descended from his great-grandfather, Captain Nathaniel West. Moore bequeathed Romancoke to his son, Bernard, but he left to his son, Thomas, the land he had bought from the Rev. Fox, noting that the Fox property, which bordered Bull Swamp, included a grist mill. Secondary sources indicate that Colonel Thomas Moore quickly disposed of the Fox property by giving part of it to his half-brother, George Seaton, and ridding himself of the remainder by means of a lottery. As it turned out, William Seaton won the mill and mill tract in the lottery. Thus, in 1774, when George Washington bought the mill and 100 acres of land from Seaton or his heirs, the quit claim deed he received from Colonel Thomas Moore cleared the title of potential encumbrances.

On April 25, 1774, only two weeks after George Washington had bought Romancoke and the Seaton property on his stepson's behalf, William Black offered to sell him 3,000 acres of land known as Huntington, a West plantation that bordered the upper side of Bull Swamp. Black, then acting as William Dandridge's

agent, told Washington that the Huntington tract contained "a very fine new brick house, which joins your mill (Custis Mill)."

Thus, Washington's ownership of the Custis Mill site on Bull (later Custis Mill) Creek is certain. However, there is no evidence that he ever purchased the Huntington tract.

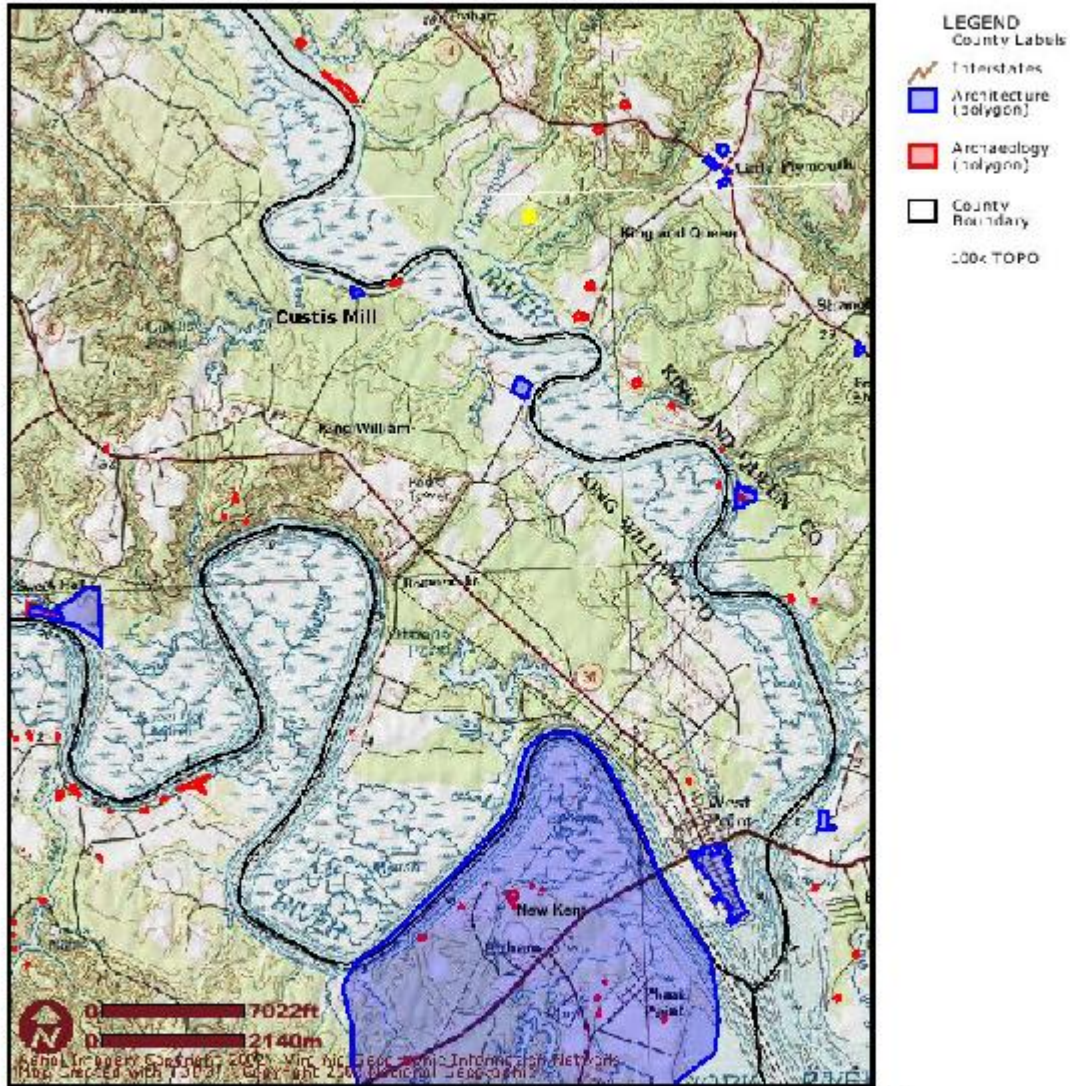
John Parke Custis, who came of age in 1778, resided at Eltham, his ancestral home. He died there in November 1781, at which point George Washington asked Bartholomew Dandridge to serve as guardian of the decedent's young children and to assume the duties of administering the Custis estate. He did so until his death in 1785, at which point Washington assumed management of the Custis estate. King William County's real estate tax rolls indicate that from 1782 to 1799 the late John Parke Custis's estate included 4,600 acres, which were entrusted to the care of William Bailey, an overseer. A large number of slaves then resided on the Custis property. Over time, a number of overseers were employed by the estate's administrators.

In 1795 and 1796 George and Martha Dandridge Custis Washington began transferring the late John Parke Custis's land to his son, George Washington Parke Custis, a resident of Georgetown, Maryland, later part of the District of Columbia. In 1800 the King William County tax commissioner noted that John Parke Custis's estate, which included 4,821 acres, had been transferred to his son, George Washington Parke Custis. In 1820, when Virginia's tax assessors began noting the aggregate value of the structural improvements on real estate, Custis was credited with \$2,000 worth of buildings. This would have included his mill, the buildings at Romancoke, and any other structures on his acreage in King William County. In 1821 Custis was credited with 2,800 acres, whose improvements were still valued at \$2,000. By 1840 the value of Custis's buildings had dwindled to \$1,500 and his land (in the aggregate) was said to border the Pamunkey and Mattaponi Rivers. The quantity of Custis's land and the value of its improvements remained constant through 1850.

George Washington Parke Custis died at Arlington on October 21, 1857. He bequeathed his King William County land to his youngest grandson, Robert E. Lee Jr. During the early 1860s, when Confederate cartographers made maps of King William County, what formerly had been known as Custis's Mill had become known as Lee's Mill. According to secondary sources, Captain Robert E. Lee Jr. took possession of the property after the Civil War and retained much of it until his death around 1914. However, around the turn of the twentieth century, he reportedly sold the Custis Mill, its pond, and some of the surrounding land to the fishing club, its current owners.

Martha W. McCartney

Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
Data Sharing System, 08/26/2009



### Custis Mill

New Kent and West Point USGS 7.5

Virginia Department of Historic Resources - August 24, 2009  
4:34 pm





Custis Mill Pond



Custis Mill Site Complex





Clubhouse and Cabin



Pond





Mill ruin interior facing south wall.



Exterior view of south wall.

## Custis Mill



Earthen dam.



Reutilized millstone.



Flume below, road overpass above.





Pond side view



View overall



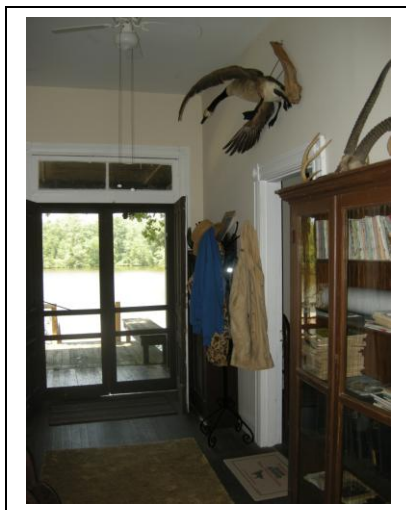
Porch posts



Chamfering detail

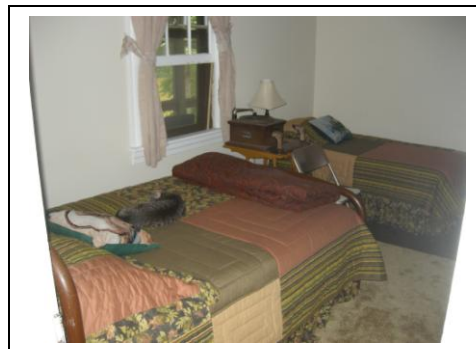


Wrap around porch

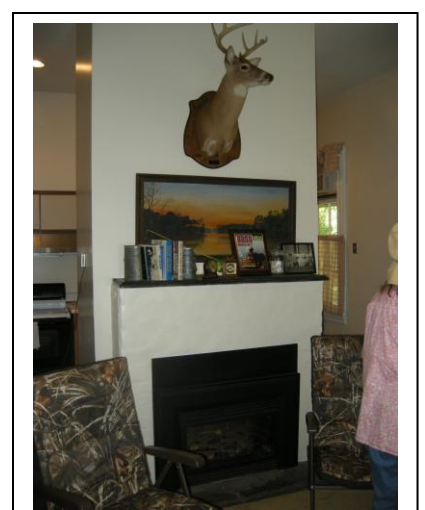


Central passage

## Clubhouse



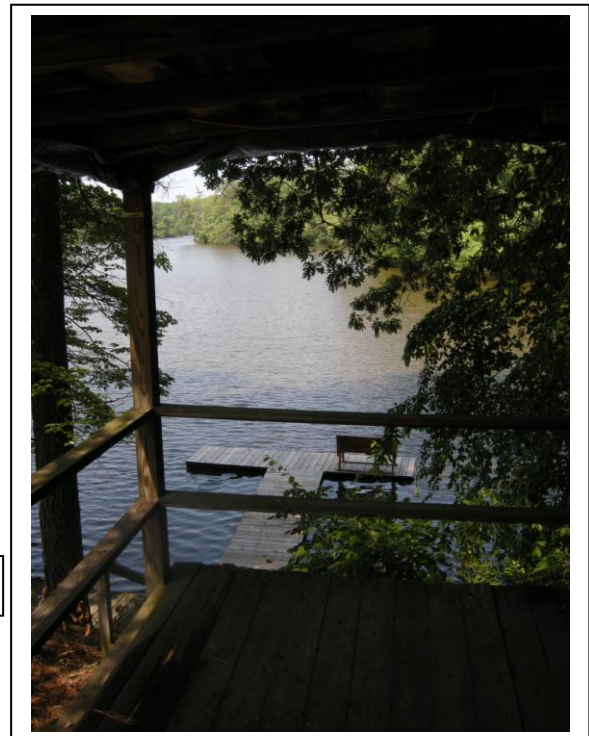
Bedroom



Living room



Cabin front



Pond overlook

## Thornton Cabin



Construction detail

Side window



Inscription - Rob B. Wood - July  
10, 1908







**Boathouse**

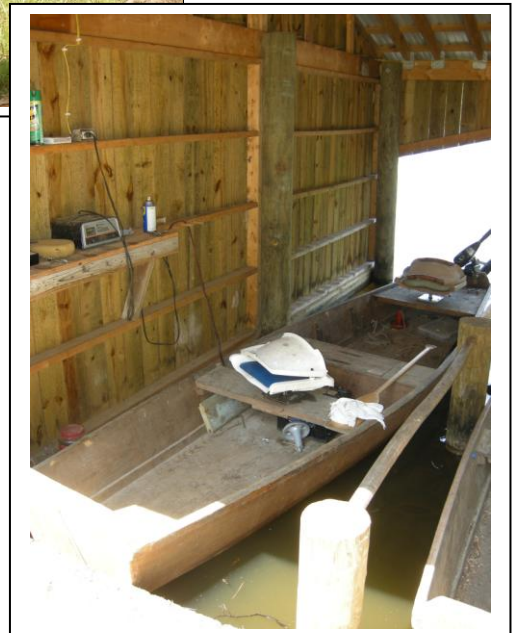
Setting



Boathouse



Boats



## Pond Yields World Record Fish



### Hubard's crappie tops world mark

BY HENRY CHRISTNER  
TIMES-DEBENTON STAFF WRITER

T. Carter Hubbard now understands why they say big presents can come in small packages.

For his 22nd birthday, Hubbard received a special fly tied by his father, Harrison Hubbard of Richmond. The lure, made from white rabbit fur and olive mylar, was dubbed the Easter Bunny.

Father and son then went to a King W. —

the young Hubbard, a graduate student in environmental engineering at Virginia Tech, caught 15 crappie, using last year's birthday present, a 6-weight custom-made fly rod.

Then, in murky water close to the bank, something large hit the honey lure and bent the fly rod double.

The catch proved to be a crappie that weighed 2 pounds, 13 ounces, which is large enough to set a world record for the species in the 12-pound topset class. Hubbard's father is submitting the paperwork required for approval by the International Game Fish Association. The record is 1-1.

#### FISHING REPORT



### WORLD RECORD INTERNATIONAL GAME FISH ASSOCIATION

This is to certify that

**T. CARTER HUBARD**

Has been awarded a world angling record for a catch of the heaviest fish of a species in an approved line class category, and that the catch was made in accordance with international angling regulations.

CRAPPIE, BLACK 2 LB 13 OZ

Species

Weight

TIPPET 6 KG (12 LB)

APRIL 4, 1994

Record Category

Date of Catch

CUSTIS MILLPOND, KING WILLIAM COUNTY, VIRGINIA, USA

Place of Catch

In witness whereof, the undersigned have affixed their signatures.

*George S. Matheson*  
Executive Committee Member

*Patricia Baker*  
President





Club Celebrates

